

13th SEPTEMBER, FRIDAY

Seminar 7: Data Collection Methodologies II (Room: TBD) - Chair and discussant: Lars Benjaminsen, DK

Laure-lise Robben and Koen Hermans, BE: Homelessness Duration and Recurrence in Belgium: An Exploratory Cluster Analysis of Administrative Data

This article presents an analysis of administrative data of those facing homelessness in Belgium between 2010 and 2018. We define homelessness as those with a reference address at a local welfare agency, which was specifically designed for people experiencing homelessness (PEH) without a residential address. Our aim is to examine the duration and recurrence of homeless spells, and to critically reflect on their categorisation and using administrative data to do so. The richness of our dataset allows us to critically glance at the classic threefold typology (transitional, episodic and chronic homelessness) that is often based on limited shelter usage data for a short period of time. We distinguish three clusters: first-timers, re-enterers and chronic homelessness, and confirm significant associations of previous studies such as age and the homeless duration. We offer a more nuanced understanding of the duration and recurrence, and this for a larger group of PEH over a longer period of time.



Laure-lise Robben is a PhD student at LUCAS, the Centre for Care Research and Consultancy at KU Leuven, supervised by prof. dr. Koen Hermans. Funded by Belspo, her PhD project focuses on homelessness trajectories and non-take-up of social rights from a dynamic perspective.

Koen Hermans is Associate Professor of Social Work and Social Policy at the Centre for Sociological Research, KU Leuven, and project leader at LUCAS, KU Leuven. His research focuses on the care and support for vulnerable and underserved populations, such as homeless persons, and youngsters with complex needs.

Veera Niemi and Elisabetta Leni, FI: Unlocking Insights on Homelessness Through Integrated Administrative Data: A Methodological Framework for Researchers in EU Countries

Finland has a long history of using administrative data for official statistics, but it has only recently become possible to merge national and regional population, health and social registers on a large scale. This shift is due to the implementation of the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in 2016, followed by the establishment of the Finnish Social and Health Data Authority (Findata) in 2019. This development in data protection legislation, and Findata's role in managing data permit applications and secure data processing, has opened up new possibilities for studying homelessness by enabling the analysis of rich individual-level data from different registers over long periods of time. The integration of multiple register sources is crucial for the study of homelessness, given its multidimensional nature and the need for a comprehensive response involving at least social services, health care and the social security system. In addition, local registers have been shown to be more reliable in identifying homelessness than national registers, but only the latter are able to detect, for example, movements between cities or changes in family structure in a timely manner. It follows that the combination of local and national datasets is key to analyzing individual housing pathways in relation to major life events. Currently, the authors are using two large administrative datasets from different data sources - including health care, social security, social services, and Statistics Finland's Central Population Agency and registers - to study different aspects of homelessness and Housing First in three major Finnish cities. The experience gained in obtaining data permission and analyzing the data has led to this methodological paper, which aims to support other researchers on homelessness in EU countries. Our framework aims to improve understanding of the GDPR regulations, highlight the potential of administrative data for homelessness research, and provide guidance on how to navigate the processes and challenges involved in accessing such valuable data.



Veera Niemi (MsSocSci) is a researcher and final year PhD candidate of social work in University of Turku, Finland. Niemi's research focuses on analysing longitudinal housing and service pathways of the homeless through longitudinal administrative register data. Niemi is also interested in building bridges between theory and practice in social work and has years of work experience also in practice social work and as a university teacher.



Elisabetta Leni is a researcher at the Y-Foundation, Finland. After working several years in the non-profit sector in Italy, she obtained a PhD in Economics at the University of Essex, UK. The current focus of her research is on homelessness and social housing.